

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, April 2, 1876, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Boston University, 5 Exeter Place, Boston. April 2nd, 1876. My darling May:

It's no use! You can't make an owl sleep at night! Here I am at two o'clock A. M. — as wide awake as ever I was in my life!

My headache has burned itself out without the aid of Dr. Morphens! Indeed he and I have been upon such bad terms of late that he now utterly refuses to attend upon me at all!

Although I cannot claim to live “in the perfumed chambers of the great under the canopies of costly state” — still I do feel inclined to exclaim — “Oh! gentle sleep! Nature'd soft nurse! How have I frighted thee that thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down and steep my senses in forgetfulness.”

I have tried every expedient I can think of to obtain sleep — but no — it won't come. It is a comfort to think that you do not know the misery of wakefulness when nature demands repose.

I close my eyes, but I can see with them shut! I try to stop thinking but it's of no use — I cannot get the reins of my mind! There is a picture before my eyes — a moving picture — a little lead-pencil vibrating in mercury ! From which you will understand that I am suffering tonight from a senere attack of telegraph on the brain !

It grows upon me more and more that today's experiment is capable of almost infinite variation — for lead-pencil is not the only imperfect conductor of electricity which can be vibrated in mercury.

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The more I explore this wonderful subject of electricity the more boundless seems the prospect before me. The Telegraphic transmission of sound is a subject as fascinating as it is wonderful — and I am only disheartened at the immensity of the horizons opened out to me. If there was only some track to steer by I might hope soon to reach the desired goal — but there is none — and I feel like the first mariner in an unknown sea — uncertain which way to go.

Please Mabel dear don't scold me for writing to you tonight for I can't help it although it is late. It rests me to write to you and I like to think that perhaps you may care to hear from me even if I have not anything very particular to say.

I wish you knew how much it is for me to have my father with me here. I feel as if I had never known him till now. It is a new pleasure to me to be able to talk freely and fully to him — and I trust that there may never again be the constraint between us that there was once. I feel somehow as if it was your love that has brought us together. Please help me out so that in the future we may never be separated any more.

I think you can do a great deal for me if you will try.

Do you know dear I have been disappointed — mortified — and disjused with myself for ever so long past — and what is still harder for me to think of — I have felt as if you were too.

I have been so unhappy for a long time past at the thought that you must have come to love me less. If you will only go on loving me — Mabel — I am sure you will be able to mould me into something at last. Don't give me up if you are disappointed with me sometimes. You have more power over my life than you can guess — for wend or woe — so tyrant be merciful!

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Goodnight with much love. from, Your own, Alec. Miss Mabel Hubbard, Brattle Street,
Cambridge.